

BRIAN HIGGINS
26TH DISTRICT, NEW YORK

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TASK FORCE

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3226

2459 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-3306
(202) 226-0347 (FAX)

726 EXCHANGE STREET
SUITE 601
BUFFALO, NY 14210
(716) 852-3501
(716) 852-3929 (FAX)

800 MAIN STREET
SUITE 3C
NIAGARA FALLS, NY 14301
(716) 282-1274
(716) 282-2479 (FAX)
higgins.house.gov

April 21, 2020

Hon. Letitia James
Attorney General of the State of New York
The Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

Re: Opposing suspension of federal environmental enforcement

Dear General James:

I write today to convey my support for your ongoing efforts to hold the federal administration to account for its lapses in the enforcement of federal environmental laws and its weakening of environmental regulations and their enforcement.

Further, I wish to convey to my strong support for the sentiment expressed by the Clean Air Coalition and approximately fifty other organizations in their correspondence to you of April 16 of this year, that your office should assess the extent to which the administration's enforcement rollback is inconsistent with federal law and pursue whatever legal action is available to you, on behalf of the State of New York and its citizens, to protect us all from the harmful effects of these environmental rollbacks, including potentially suing the Environmental Protection Agency.

Tremendous progress has been made in Western New York over the past three decades with regard to cleaning up this region's legacy of pollution and unchecked heavy industrial activity, though this work is far from completed. A key example of the success to date has been the clean up of the Buffalo River, which has been converted from a dead, industrial waterway into an important regional ecological and recreational resource. Led by Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper with more than \$80 million in federal funding, this transformation has resulted in more than \$428 million in waterfront development investment along the river corridor, meaning a five-to-one return on investment for this environmental clean-up.

But all that work, and similar efforts throughout the region, will be rendered meaningless if pollution is not kept in check at its sources. The removal of 60,000 truckloads of contaminated sediment from the floor of the Buffalo River will have been a wasted effort if new pollution is allowed to be deposited there because of these rollbacks. And the Buffalo River is just one example -- these rollbacks threaten not just to set back the progress that has been made to date on environmental remediation, in some cases they will obliterate decades of concerted expensive work to restore ecosystems and improve the health of communities.

Again, I commend you for your efforts to hold this administration to account, and I encourage you to use all the resources at your disposal to continue this important work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Brian Higgins" with a stylized flourish at the end.

Brian Higgins
Member of Congress